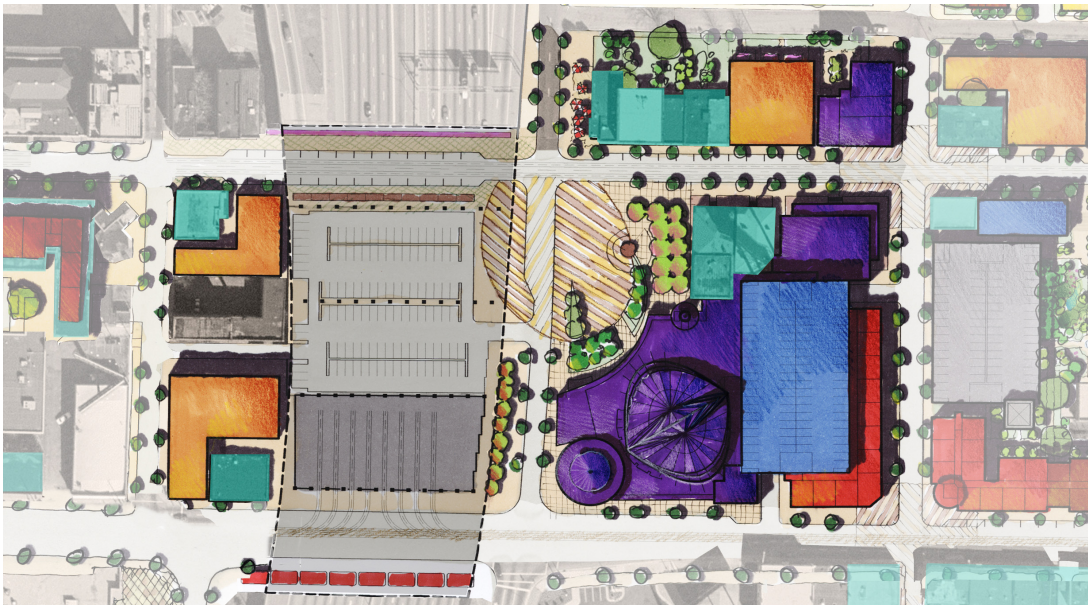


4.5.7 Project 7: Cultural Arts Center

Figure 4.5.7:
Project 7 Site Plan



Project 7 recreates a portion of the old Carnegie Branch Library and restores the SCLC buildings as part of a new museum

Imagine Downtown envisioned the Cultural Arts Center to be a cultural anchor at Auburn Avenue's midpoint. Located at the intersection of Auburn and Interstate 75/85, the project site enjoys excellent access, good visibility and close proximity to the MLK National Historic Site. This project is conceptualized as the physical 'link' between Sweet Auburn's civil rights history and Auburn Avenue's historical significance as an entertainment district; it incorporates a museum, performance halls and supporting administrative and back-of-house spaces. The center also integrates Dobbs Plaza into its design, rehabilitating a neglected Olympic-vintage public space into a grand entry for the main performance hall lobby. Dobbs Plaza is extended under the interstate viaduct to increase the area available for outdoor performances; a large 'digital billboard' screens the viaduct's northern abutment and continues the space of Dobbs Plaza to the west. Elsewhere, the Prince Hall Masons' and SCLC Women's buildings are restored as part of a museum component that recreates in spirit the old Carnegie Library. Residential mixed-use lines a widened Hilliard Street and wraps the Edgewood corner. Specially-designed vending kiosks occupy a widened Edgewood sidewalk and form an extension of the Auburn Curb Market. The area opposite this vending is an ideal location for a streetcar maintenance barn with its central location and accessibility. Finally, mixed-use buildings infill sites along Bell Street.

Development Program Summary:

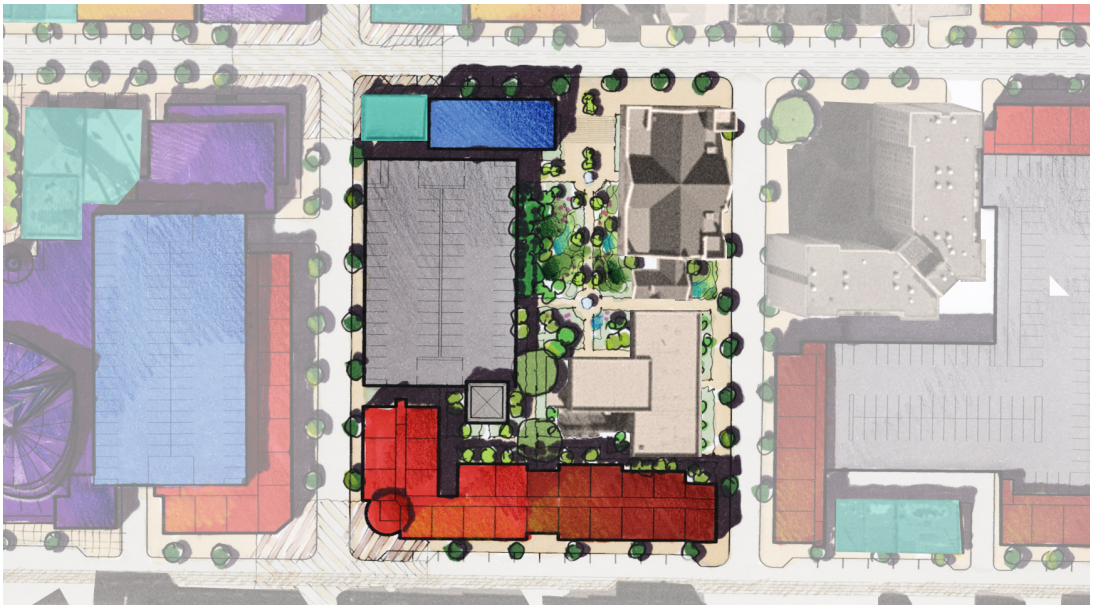
Residential	
Single-Family	0 units
Multifamily	63 units
Retail	28,722 square feet
Office	167,890 square feet
Hospitality	0 units
Institutional / Cultural	141,500 square feet
Other	0 square feet
Parking	
Surface	105 spaces
Structured	504 spaces

Project Economic Highlights

The relatively low current land cost combined with the introduction of a significant amount of office product provide good support for the major cultural center planned for this site. As with all of the projects analyzed, this project works best economically with its housing component being all-condominium. The centralized location will strengthen the Cultural Center itself, while the Cultural Center will provide destination appeal to area retail, as well as added market appeal for its housing and office components.

4.5.8 Project 8: Hilliard East Frontage

Figure 4.5.8:
Project 8 Site Plan



The social legacy and leadership of Reverend Williams Holmes Borders is honored in a memorial courtyard, incubator office and affordable housing

The east side of Hilliard Street between Auburn and Edgewood is dominated by the parking lot for Wheat Street Baptist Church and contains vacant parcels and buildings either unoccupied or in serious disrepair. Hilliard itself constricts at Auburn to the width of the narrowest streets in the district. The Edgewood frontage is equally distressed, and Auburn is faced with a six-foot retaining wall for half the length of the block. These conditions dictated the site response and shaped the program of Project 8. The main feature is a new six-level 200+ space parking deck for the church, freeing the surface lot for conversion into a landscaped courtyard with a grand stair leading down to Auburn Avenue. The courtyard continues through to Edgewood Avenue, and could contain some monument or interpretive installation to the accomplishments of Reverend Williams Holmes Borders. The project also recommends renovation and reuse of the three-story building at the Auburn / Hilliard corner, and a similar new incubator office building adjacent to it masking the existing grade change. Along Edgewood, the vacant and underutilized lots are an ideal opportunity to add to the street's limited housing with a three-story multifamily building with storefront retail at the Hilliard corner. Storefront retail also supports the Auburn frontage, and Hilliard is widened to match its profile north of Auburn.

Development Program Summary:

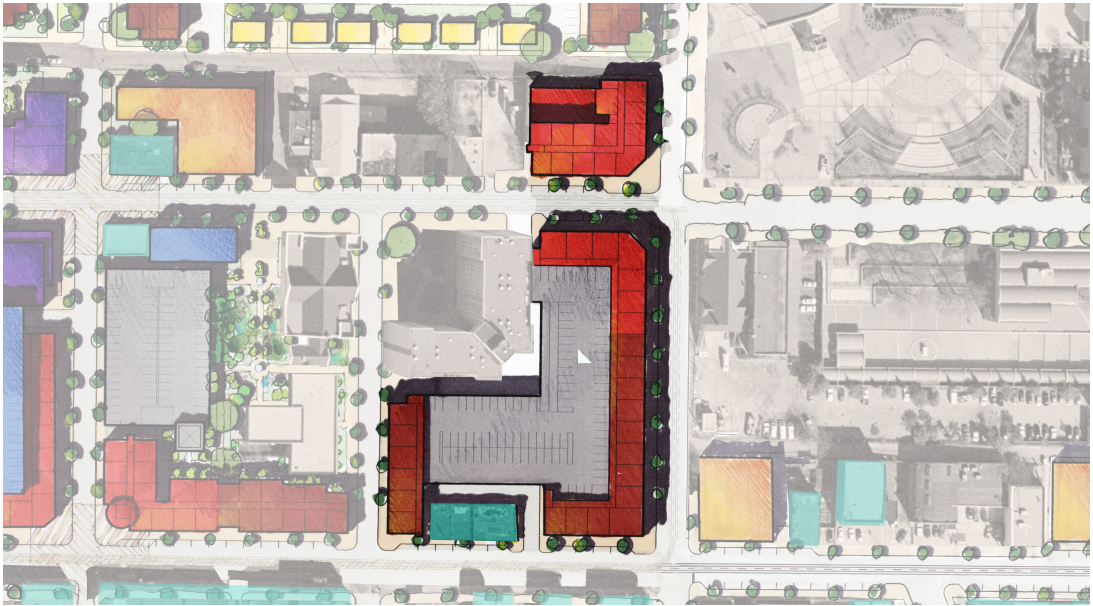
Residential	
Single-Family	0 units
Multifamily	46 units
Retail	17,614 square feet
Office	15,900 square feet
Hospitality	0 units
Institutional / Cultural	0 square feet
Other	0 square feet
Parking	
Surface	0 spaces
Structured	227 spaces

Project Economic Highlights

Relatively high land cost puts pressure on this mixed-use development to generate retail and office rates that are slightly above market but nonetheless attainable. Additionally, the housing component needs to be either condominium or higher-end rental, which lessens the ability of the project to include an element of affordability. With respect to market trends and project economics, its housing component works better as an all-condominium project.

4.5.9 Project 9: Edgewood North Frontage

Figure 4.5.9:
Project 9 Site Plan



A new ceremonial plaza frames the historic sanctuary of Ebenezer Baptist Church and marks the entry to Sweet Auburn

Project 9 recognizes its strategic yet delicate position of being both the edge of the Sweet Auburn commercial district and the backdrop to the National Historic Site of Ebenezer Baptist Church. Its most significant existing assets are three 1920's-era commercial buildings along Edgewood, though poorly maintained; other buildings are in worse condition or have undergone partial collapse. The redevelopment proposal makes the most of its context by reinforcing the edge of Jackson Street and Sweet Auburn with two four-story residential mixed-use buildings that acts as an 'urban wall', breaking back only at Auburn Avenue. The plaza created by the chamfered building corners focuses attention squarely on Ebenezer Baptist Church and creates a symbolic gateway into Sweet Auburn. Storefront retail occupies the ground floor of both buildings framing this plaza, with the northern half capturing almost 14,000 square feet of space. The main (south) building wraps a major parking deck that provides spaces for residents as well as retail customers and seniors living in Wheat Street Tower. Included in the project are the renovations of the historic Edgewood buildings as commercial mixed-use. This project has the potential for additional parking which could be opened to the public or integrated into Project 8, releasing spaces in the Wheat Street Baptist deck for use by the Cultural Arts Center.

Development Program Summary:

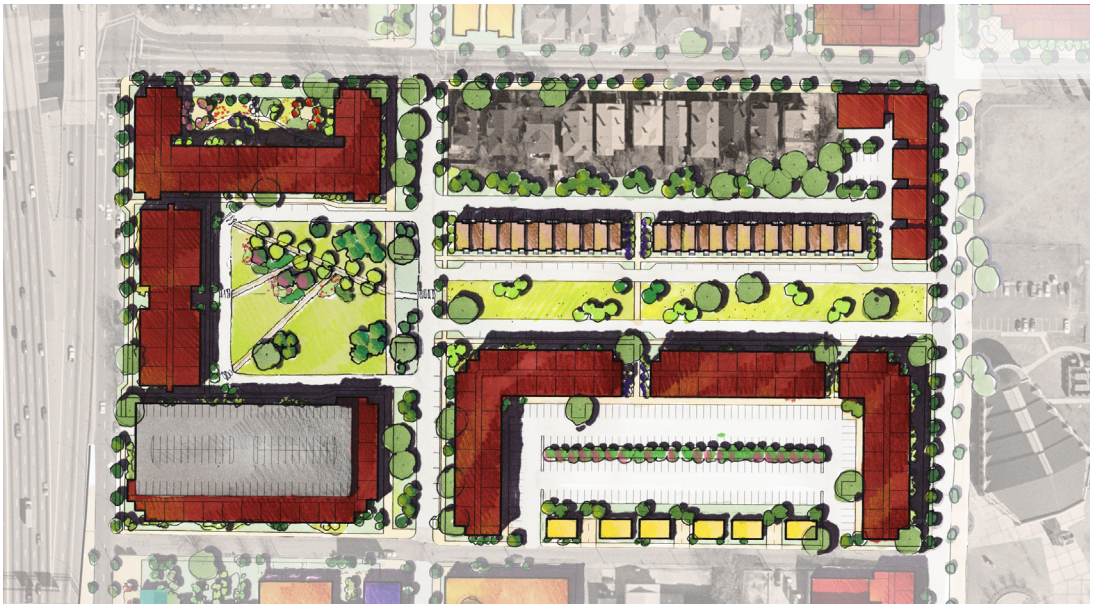
Residential	
Single-Family	0 units
Multifamily	114 units
Retail	33,600 square feet
Office	4,000 square feet
Hospitality	0 units
Institutional / Cultural	0 square feet
Other	0 square feet
Parking	
Surface	0 spaces
Structured	388 spaces

Project Economic Highlights

As a mixed use with an all-condominium housing component, Edgewood North generates strong potential returns, well above minimum requirements. As an all-apartment mixed-use project, the development generates only the minimum IRR requirement of 10.0%. Retail rates will need to be slightly above market but still within reach. Overall, the Edgewood North project represents a project with a reasonable prospect for success, particularly given its increasingly strong retail location.

4.5.10 Project 10: Wheat Street Gardens

Figure 4.5.10:
Project 10 Site Plan



The historic spirit of Lyons Avenue and Jackson Hill Apartments are recreated in the residential mall and the northwest courtyard building

This twelve-acre site provides the greatest opportunity for new residential stock in Sweet Auburn. The proposed development embraces the historic street pattern, which is highlighted by a reconstruction of old Lyons Avenue as a residential boulevard in the tradition of Portland Place in St. Louis or St. James Court in Louisville. Lyons Avenue and its landscaped median connect Hilliard and Jackson Streets and terminate on the west end in a one-acre 'community green' providing needed recreation space for area residents. A high-rise tower on western edge of the property takes advantage of the skyline view and creates a focal point for the boulevard; while lower multifamily buildings and a parking deck give a sense of enclosure and privacy to the green. The green is bordered by a linear park featuring a continuation of the Freedom Park PATH Trail, linking ultimately to the King Memorial MARTA station. The south side of Lyons Avenue is lined with four-story multifamily buildings, while two-to-three-story townhouses frame the boulevard on the north. Elsewhere, the intimate scale of Old Wheat Street is celebrated by two-story single-family houses replicating traditional 'shallow-lot' designs being reconstructed in the vicinity of Boulevard; while urban-style lofts at Jackson and Dobbs complete the unique mix of housing characterizing this project.

Development Program Summary:

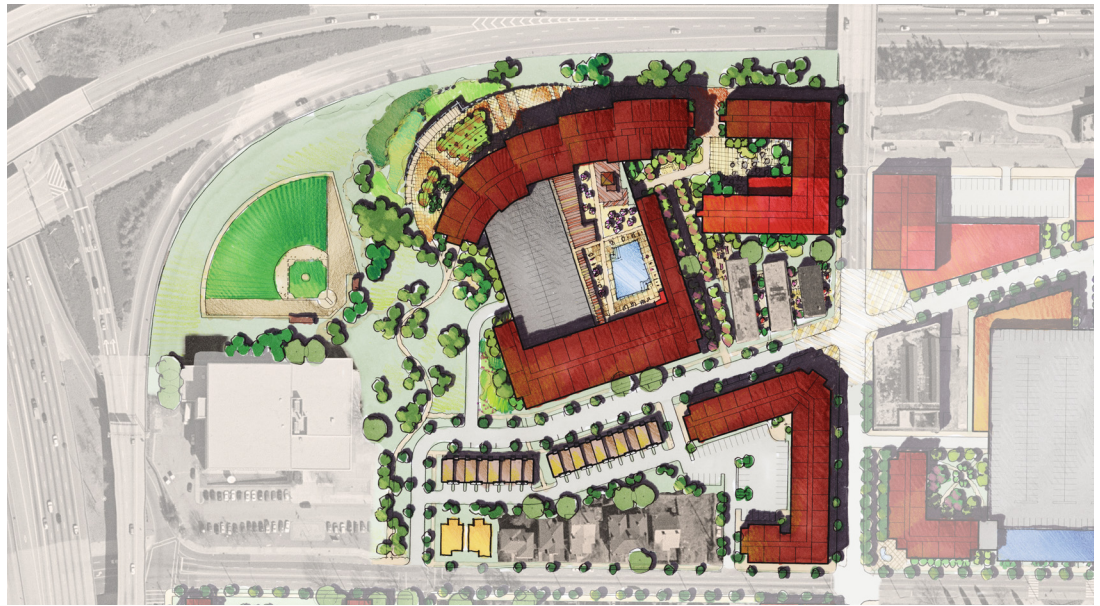
Residential	
Single-Family	33 units
Multifamily	855 units
Retail	0 square feet
Office	0 square feet
Hospitality	0 units
Institutional / Cultural	0 square feet
Other	0 square feet
Parking	
Surface	196 spaces
Structured	728 spaces

Project Economic Highlights

Wheat Street Gardens will undoubtedly include a significant affordable-housing component, with rental housing representing a major portion of that housing. As an all-rental development, the project will not allow affordable – much less low-income – housing. With a minimum 35% / 65% mix of condominiums and apartments, however, rental rates can be reduced to certain levels of "affordability." Part of the housing ministry of Wheat Street Baptist may address the transition to homeownership, which is encouraged by several different types of residential products – condominiums, lofts, conventional townhouses and single-family detached.

4.5.11 Project 11: Atlanta Overlook

Figure 4.5.11:
Project 11 Site Plan



The 'moderne' renovation of Houston Square complements the extension of Dobbs and adds an exotic note to the development

Second only to Wheat Street Gardens as a major new residential opportunity in Sweet Auburn, Project 11 also benefits from a striking skyline view and an adjacency to the Freedom Park trail. However, almost the entire original neighborhood context was eliminated during the construction of the Atlanta Overlook complex in the 1960s. Two fragments remain – a truncated Houston Street and the 1930's 'moderne' Houston Square Apartments. The renovated Steam Laundry building at Dobbs (Houston) and Jackson streets is complemented in the project by the adaptive reuse of most of Houston Square to re-establish a powerful link to the Sweet Auburn storyline; sensitive treatment to accentuate the steamship-like architecture of Houston Square provides an exotic setting for outdoor dining and entertainment in its courtyard spaces. Dobbs is once again connected to Irwin Street, and flanked by multifamily buildings and townhouses. The Freedom Park trail is extended around the north and west sides of the project to proceed south along Hilliard; a raised promenade at the northwest corner captures the spectacular views of Downtown for the public. The project's signature is a stepped residential block that sweeps the same corner and acts as a landmark for interstate motorists. Finally, a three-story component reinforces the Jackson frontage and replicates an older chamfered building at Dobbs to frame a new plaza on the King-to-Carter Freedom Walk.

Development Program Summary:

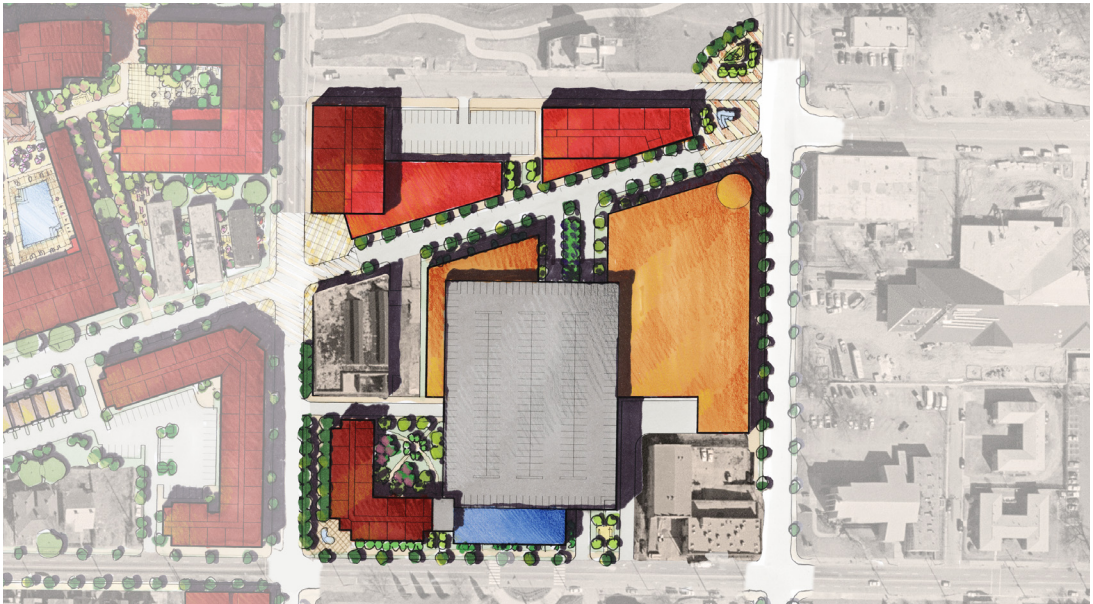
Residential	
Single-Family	24 units
Multifamily	536 units
Retail	19,100 square feet
Office	11,364 square feet
Hospitality	0 units
Institutional / Cultural	0 square feet
Other	0 square feet
Parking	
Surface	28 spaces
Structured	772 spaces

Project Economic Highlights

The location of this project – overlooking the Freedom Parkway with dramatic Downtown skyline views – drives its strong market prospects as a condominium-based development. Land prices will likely be high, making a significant apartment component challenging. However, some form of condominium / apartment combination could generate a return that is sufficient to allow the provision of an affordable housing component to the project.

4.5.12 Project 12: NPS North Parking

Figure 4.5.12:
Project 12 Site Plan



The demolished Scripto Factory, the scene of a civil rights conflict, is acknowledged in a new mixed-use building along the Freedom Walk

What is now the vast surface parking lot of the King National Historic Site was once an area of scattered houses and small factories including the Scripto Works, which was the scene of labor strike in 1964 that was resolved by a threatened boycott by Dr. King. Scripto was demolished in 1995 due to environmental contamination; yet the steam laundry at Dobbs and Jackson and a similar building at Irwin and Boulevard remain as links to the past. Recognizing the ongoing need for visitor parking, Project 12 includes a major five-level deck with provisions for four bus access and parking. The deck is concealed by new Park Service offices on Irwin, by a mixed-use adaptation of the Scripto façade on Dobbs Avenue, and by a combination urban grocery / community center along Boulevard. Mixed-use condominiums / lofts occupy the triangular portion of the site between Dobbs and Cain Street, while a similar multifamily building anchors the southwest corner. Because of the obstruction posed by the deck, the newly-created Freedom Walk is shifted to the east side of Jackson Street; at an interpretive marker describing the Scripto incident in a small plaza at Dobbs and Jackson, the route turns east to proceed up Dobbs past storefront retail and restaurants to a major new plaza at Boulevard. Here the plaza design incorporates a relocation of Xavier Medina-Campeny's 'Homage to King' sculpture as well as additional interpretive markers for the Freedom Walk.

Development Program Summary:

Residential	
Single-Family	0 units
Multifamily	131 units
Retail	114,760 square feet
Office	22,938 square feet
Hospitality	0 units
Institutional / Cultural	83,495 square feet
Other	0 square feet
Parking	
Surface	196 spaces
Structured	1,066 spaces

Project Economic Highlights

The project will benefit from a likely favorable land cost structure as well as a relatively strong community-oriented retail location. Site size and topography may attract a mid-sized national supermarket if adequate on-site parking to the retailer's specifications can be achieved - especially with the demand for bus and automobile parking mandated by the King National Historic Site.

4.5.13 Project 13: Edgewood Gateway

Figure 4.5.13:
Project 13 Site Plan



New infill and a renovation blend the project into the rich existing context of one- and two-story historic buildings

The recent transfer of the Edgewood Gateway parcels from National Pak Service ownership to the City of Atlanta gives Project 13 a unique position in the portfolio of redevelopment projects. Since property is consolidated in the hands of a single public entity, it is ideal as a pilot project to focus the mission and operation of a Sweet Auburn oversight organization. The generous stock of fine old commercial buildings, some being recently renovated, and the handful of new businesses are encouraging signs that revitalization is gaining momentum at this end of the study area. The largest portion of the project takes advantage of the long Chamberlain Street frontage to build seventeen for-sale townhouses with rear-accessed garages, similar in scale and layout to the Edgewood Exchange live-work development at Chamberlain and Jackson. The alleys behind each block of townhouses are shared with perpendicular parking and loading areas to serve the Edgewood commercial uses. While there are several Edgewood buildings nearby that require renovation, the limits of Project 13 include only one such renovation target but an additional wide lot for a new mixed-use infill component. This project thus offers the potential for several different types of modest redevelopment activities – new residential attached product, historic preservation, new small-scale infill – to build the capacity of the district redevelopment authority.

Development Program Summary:

Residential	
Single-Family	17 units
Multifamily	0 units
Retail	7,500 square feet
Office	7,500 square feet
Hospitality	0 units
Institutional / Cultural	0 square feet
Other	0 square feet

Parking	
Surface	32 spaces
Structured	0 spaces

Project Economic Highlights

This small townhouse and mixed-use project should benefit from the increasing strength of the eastern portion of the Edgewood market, providing a reasonable return for its developers / investors if the housing component is condominium. The achievement of market rates can overcome high land prices, although the on-site parking is crucial and may need to be supplemented with additional parking either in a remote lot or on-street.

4.5.14 Other Redevelopment Projects

In addition to the thirteen catalytic projects, there are several other areas that represent significant redevelopment opportunities, primarily in the form of vacant land or surface parking lots, or underutilized or obsolete buildings. There is also the need to recognize the multitude of historic buildings on Auburn and Edgewood that are not part of the catalytic projects, but nevertheless require renovation to attract active uses and contribute to the character of the district. While this document does not lay out future development in these areas in detail, it does attempt to set the general direction and tone of development and quantify likely programs. The following sections discuss these topics.

4.5.14.1 Auburn / Edgewood Preservation and Infill (Project Area 14)

Auburn and Edgewood are rich in historic buildings that drive the character of Sweet Auburn. Some have been renovated since the 1994 Redevelopment Plan was adopted; but many have continued to decline from deferred maintenance. *No contributing building in this redevelopment zone should be demolished.* It is of paramount importance that the redevelopment entity ultimately responsible for the stewardship of Sweet Auburn actively pursues improvements to these valuable buildings, preferably with

Development Program Summary:

Residential	
Single-Family	0 units
Multifamily	10 units
Retail (Rehab)	250,000 square feet
Retail (New)	65,000 square feet
Office (Rehab)	188,000 square feet
Office (New)	53,000 square feet
Hospitality	0 units
Institutional (Rehab)	6,000 square feet
Other	0 square feet

the partnership of the individual owners. The Main Street Center of the National Trust for Historic Preservation establishes the framework for revitalizing the historic commercial districts of small-town America; the Urban Main Street program takes these frameworks into the city. The four basic points – organization, promotion, design and economic restructuring – are all components of the redevelopment plan and all potentially in place; organization and promotion in the leadership and mission of the redevelopment entity, design under the guidance of the Urban Design Commission and the updated zoning, and economics in the arrival of the market demonstrated during Imagine Downtown. Market-based revitalization has already begun at the eastern end of Edgewood, and should be encouraged to continue down the corridor. The program chart above reflects the renovation and repositioning of these buildings.

There are also some historic resources at the western end of the corridor that, while outside of the Landmark District and not individually listed by the city, are indispensable to the vernacular of both Auburn and Edgewood. In particular, the two three-story buildings on Auburn adjacent to Equitable Place merit preservation for their architecture, and provide a preview of the built environment further east. Likewise on Edgewood, the two early parking facilities behind the Auburn buildings are also instrumental in the story of the district.

Finally, there are several vacant parcels and surface parking lots along Edgewood and Auburn that ideally would be redeveloped with compatible infill. The programs for these sites have been estimated using a full-site build-out and a structure height roughly equivalent to the surroundings, following the 'compatibility rule' of the Landmark District. The architecture of these projects should follow the Auburn Avenue Design Guidelines whether in the Landmark District or not, as the strengthening of the district's visual harmony and individuality is essential to building Sweet Auburn's marketability.

The 'Urban Main Street' program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation is a model for the Auburn and Edgewood corridors

4.5.14.2 Peachtree Commercial (Project Area 15)

The area between Park Place and Courtland, and Dobbs and Auburn is close to some of the tallest office towers in Downtown Atlanta; and yet over two-thirds is occupied by surface parking or one-story parking structures – a gross underutilization of prime developable land. Imagine Downtown recognized the high-density potential of this area with the AT&T Building and Georgia-Pacific Plaza setting the pattern for future development. With a

hypothetical program following Imagine Downtown, over 700 new housing units and 700,000 square feet of new office can be accommodated on these sites, with a significant amount of ground-level retail as well. Imagine Downtown also recognized the possibility of subdividing the blocks to provide a pedestrian-oriented street running east to west similar in character to Fairlie or Poplar, replicating in part the small-block structure of the Fairlie-Poplar district. This idea was extended to Catalytic Project 1 in the form of Glazener Avenue. In the Peachtree Commercial area, the new street provides a link between Woodruff Park and Sweet Auburn that broadens the opportunity for storefront retail, restaurants and entertainment venues.

Development Program Summary:

Residential	
Single-Family	0 units
Multifamily	700 units
Retail	200,000 square feet
Office	700,000 square feet
Institutional / Cultural	0 square feet
Other	0 square feet

Each additional redevelopment area has its own distinct character

4.5.14.3 Grady Homes (Project Area 16)

Grady Homes has had an active master planning effort running concurrently with the Butler-Auburn process, in addition to preliminary redevelopment plans drawn up as part of the HOPE VI redevelopment bid for Capitol Homes. Because of this, the Illustrative Plan departs from convention to show a detailed redevelopment proposal for Grady, reflective of the state of the master plan as of March 2005. The highlights of the Grady plan include a major public open space or 'Great Lawn' at the center of the community; multifamily along Decatur Street in the 'railroad loft' aesthetic discussed below; a senior village centered around the Antoine Graves facilities; and a townhouse community at the north end of the site. The master plan for Grady Homes also includes the revitalization and activation of Butler Park. The Grady Plan was included in the presentation to the community at the Butler-Auburn public workshop in February 2005.

Development Program Summary:

Residential	
Single-Family	85 units
Multifamily	634 units
Senior Facilities	470 units
Retail	18,300 square feet
Office	0 square feet
Institutional / Cultural	20,000 square feet
Other	0 square feet

4.5.14.4 Butler Park Residential (Project Area 17)

Four blocks east of Grady Homes are all that remain of the single-family neighborhood element of Sweet Auburn – and many of the existing houses are in need of renovation, although some are being improved due to the stabilizing effect of the new Auburn-Glenn development bounding the area on the east. The proposed program includes renovations of substandard or deteriorated homes, and demolition / reconstruction of dilapidat-

Development Program Summary:

Residential	
SF (Rehab)	28 units
SF (New)	7 units
Multifamily (Rehab)	60 units
Multifamily (New)	150 units
Retail, Office	0 square feet
Institutional / Cultural	0 square feet
Other	0 square feet

ed properties – as well as new homes on vacant lots. The program also reflects the redevelopment of the Gartrell Courts apartment complex on Borders Street, and the renovation of the apartments on Chamberlain. Even though the residential densities around this area are increasing, it is important to the Sweet Auburn narrative that this single-family component – like a similar stretch along Dobbs Avenue – is preserved.

4.5.14.5 Georgia Railroad Corridor (Project Area 18)

Project Area 18 consists of the remaining evidence of the rail-based manufacturing that sprung up along Decatur Street in the early part of the twentieth-century, following the line of the old Georgia Railroad to Augusta. The area also contains small-scale retail supporting both the manufacturing concerns and large wholesale / distribution businesses that emerged with the rise of trucking. While almost all the manufacturing uses have been closed or relocated (the main exception being a commercial bakery on La France Street well east of Sweet Auburn), many of their former buildings remain, providing a historic dimension to this still-active rail corridor. Many of these complexes have been renovated and adapted to other uses, such as the SGF facility at Bell Street, or the Mattress Factory Lofts, or the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mill. Others, like the Conklin Tin Company on MLK Jr. Drive, or the Pratt-Pullman works near the bakery, are declining from neglect. The plan therefore proposes preservation and adaptive reuse of all historic industrial buildings in the area, with a mixed-use program. New construction would be contemporary interpretations of the industrial loft aesthetic, represented in the figure below by the Alta West development in the Marietta Street railroad corridor on the northwest side of Atlanta. In addition, a new senior center to replace the Edgewood facility removed for the Cultural Arts Center would be located along Decatur Street adjacent to Grady Homes.

Development Program Summary:	
Residential	
Single-Family	0 units
Multifamily (Rehab)	22 units
Multifamily (New)	284 units
Retail (Rehab)	60,000 square feet
Retail (New)	40,000 square feet
Office	0 square feet
Institutional / Cultural	20,000 square feet
Other	0 square feet

Figure 4.5.14:
Industrial
Vernacular:
Mattress Factory,
Alta West



(Images: Surber Barber Choate & Hertlein Architects)

4.6 Public Improvements Plan

Public Improvements are an important factor in improving the overall visual appearance of the area. Often difficult to get funding for, the public improvements projects identified herein are intended to only those most important for the success of the plan. In other words, they do not represent a lofty 'wish-list'; rather, they represent those projects deemed most critical and with the highest degree of likely implementation. Projects are delineated into three types: Transportation / Circulation; Parks / Open Space; and Streetscapes.

4.6.1 Transportation / Circulation Plan

The Auburn corridor is well-served by its street network which spans several functional levels. The local street grid is a legacy of the earliest days of Atlanta and provides a fine-grained circulation system for the area; there are few discontinuities in the grid. From a citywide perspective, the one-way pairs of Courtland and Piedmont, as well as the Boulevard artery provides rapid connections to areas north and south of Downtown. Interstate 75/85, despite its impact on Auburn Avenue, gives superb access to the metro region. The recommendations therefore focus on small adjustments to the existing grid.

As good as the Auburn street network is, there are some areas where connectivity could be improved by filling in the gaps. The most significant is re-establishing Houston Street to intersect with Hilliard and John Wesley Dobbs Avenue. Once continuous to Peachtree, Houston currently dead-ends into the Atlanta Overlook apartment complex. Extending it to Hilliard would increase access and frontage for the redevelopment of Overlook, as well as provide a direct link between a redeveloped Wheat

Figure 4.6.1:
Circulation Plan





Street Gardens, through Overlook, to a new retail center at Boulevard. On the south, Fitzgerald Street could be extended to Edgewood as it was originally built, providing a secondary access route to the new Auburn-Glenn development.

There are also opportunities to build completely new streets in the corridor, not so much to improve connectivity but to create memorable places that help define development character. At the west, a new pedestrian street or 'mew' could extend from Woodruff Park into the blocks between Park Place and Courtland. With complementary development, this area could have some of the intimate qualities found in Covent Garden in London or Via Mizner in Palm Beach, Florida. Another opportunity for such a 'mew' is a new east west mid-block connection between Courtland Street and Piedmont Avenue, creating the southern boundary for the potential 'Dobb Mixed-Use' project. This new street would play the dual function of serving new retail and providing service access to the mixed-use project. On the east, two new streets inside the boundaries of Wheat Street Gardens frame a narrow park between Hilliard and Jackson. This park, surrounded by new townhouses, could take on the gracious residential character of places like St. James Court in Louisville or Portland Place in St. Louis.

The biggest transportation improvement in the corridor is the Eastside Circulator Trolley, which stakeholders feel needs at a minimum to serve Auburn, but could be extended to link other east side attractions like Oakland Cemetery and the State Capitol. This concept was originally conceived (in this form) during the Imagine Downtown Charette Week for the Peachtree Focus Area. Subsequently, the idea has garnered steam and is being pushed by advocates such as CAP, particularly as an appendage of a potential Peachtree Street Streetcar. Further study needs to be conducted on the feasibility of the routes, and the cost of steel wheels versus rubber tires.

4.6.2 Parks / Open Space Plan

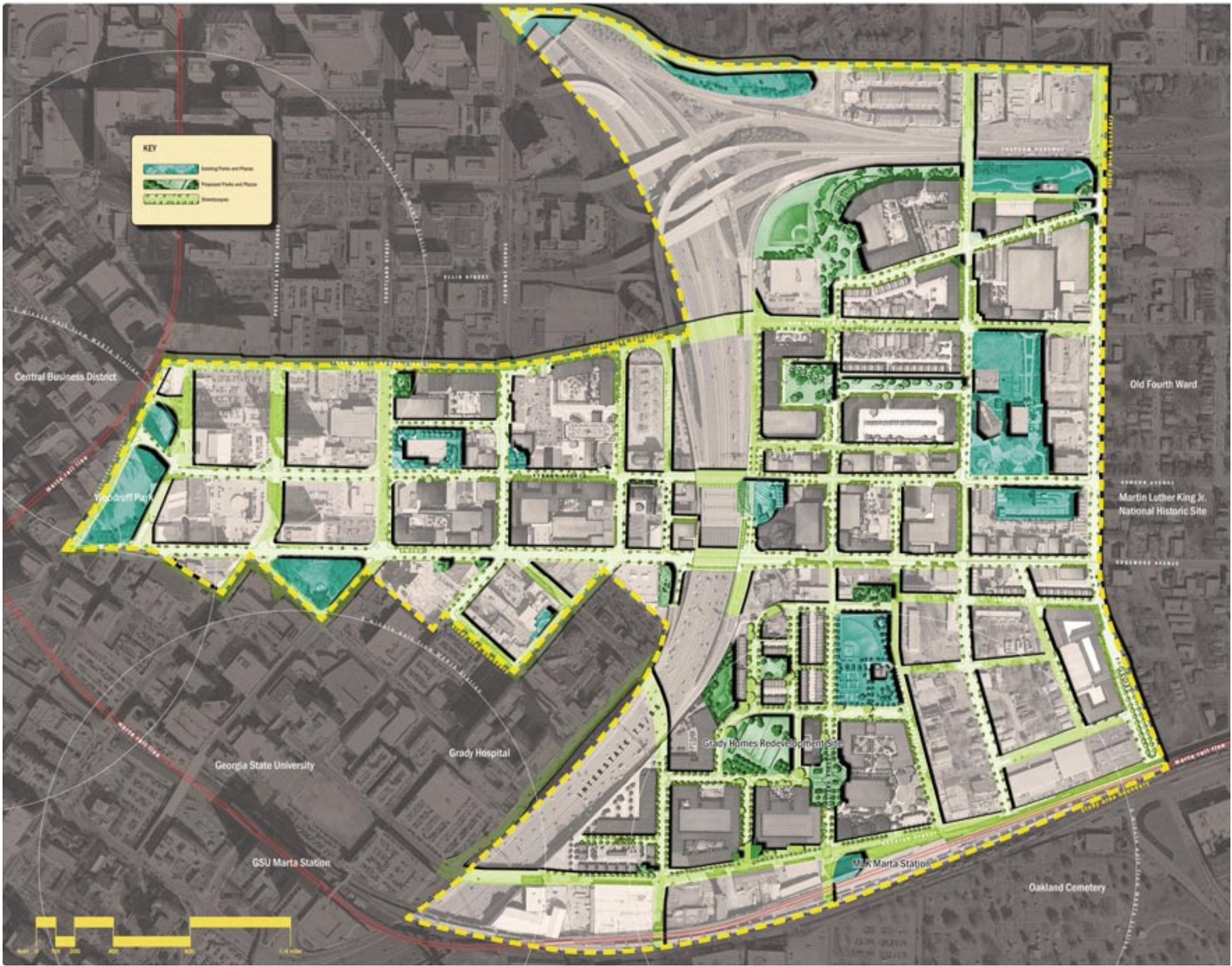
Thriving, successful neighborhoods are characterized by abundant parks and open spaces that enhance the visual quality of the area and contribute to the social and cultural needs of the residents. Although the Auburn Avenue district already has a stock of parks and plazas, the redevelopment planning effort calls for adding many new public open spaces to meet the needs of future residents and employees. The Plan goes beyond just adding new open space; it aims to create a connected series of parks and plazas which can contribute to the historic and cultural storyline of the Sweet Auburn District.

Prominent amongst these new open spaces are two large parks east of the expressway - a two-acre park which forms the centerpiece of the Grady Homes redevelopment plan ('the great lawn') and a new public open space that fronts the redevelopment of Wheat Street Gardens. Supporting these major parks are two renovated active recreation spaces - at Selena S. Butler Park (fronting Hilliard Street) and the grounds behind Walden Middle School.

But the most crucial open space project, creating a new landmark for this district is the enhanced John Wesley Dobbs Plaza, renovated as a part of the Anchor Link Project. Dobbs Plaza is visualized to be the link connecting the east and west side, negating the visual barrier created by the construction of the expressway. It is envisioned as the frontage and extension of the new Cultural Arts Center, extending the performance area to the currently underutilized space under the expressway. A new interactive audio-visual display on the north wall under the expressway, supported by new lighting and sidewalk enhancements will replace the existing dark, uninviting passage with a grand gateway into this district. This project is a critical redevelopment piece along Auburn Avenue.



Figure 4.5:
Public Space Framework Plan



public spaces

.....

streets, parks and plazas



In addition to these major open spaces, a series of smaller parks and plazas are planned throughout the entire district. In fact, most of the new mixed-use development projects described above includes open space components which are linked by streetscapes. These include a plaza at John Wesley Dobbs Avenue and Courtland Street (fronting First Congregation Church), enhancing the landscape around Herndon Plaza, and renovating John Calhoun Park (at Auburn Avenue and Piedmont Avenue) in addition to the revamped Dobbs Plaza.

The Peace Plaza, connected to the National Parks Services Martin Luther King Jr. Historic Site is currently the largest public open space in this district. The Redevelopment Plan recommends further utilizing this popular tourist venue by improving its links to the 1.5 mile Freedom Park Trail System which connects to the Carter Center. This would require streetscape investment along Jackson Street and Houston Streets – connecting into the Freedom Parkway Trail at the intersection of Boulevard and Houston. This new connection also provides opportunities to create a sequence of intermittent plazas at multiple locations; the intersection at Auburn Avenue and Jackson is envisioned as the southern gateway into the National Historic District, the intersection of Jackson Street and Houston Street would be a new neighborhood retail node and the junction at Boulevard and Houston Street would form the northern gateway into the National Historic district, with the Martin Luther King Jr. sculpture located in this plaza. The site plan for the redevelopment of the Atlanta Overlook/Houston Square Apartments reserves space for creating a new park that terminates the Freedom Parkway Trail.

4.6.3 Streetscapes

Sidewalk and streetscapes investments are an integral part of open space improvements as they provide the necessary pedestrian and bicycle linkages. Within the district, improvements along Piedmont Avenue and Decatur Street connecting the planned Georgia State University student housing (at Piedmont Avenue & John Wesley Dobbs Avenue) to the campus are currently underway. Plans include the removal of one vehicular lane to widen sidewalks and provide on-street parking.

Stakeholders were most concerned about improving the visual conditions of the two principal streets, Auburn and Edgewood. Auburn Avenue was treated as an Olympic Corridor in 1995 and upgraded with special paving, lighting and signage. Unfortunately, the streetscape has fallen into disrepair since then – paving has subsided, light poles have faded or been vandalized, and the interpretive signage stolen or covered with graffiti. Edgewood has not had a comprehensive streetscape treatment at all. For these reasons, one of the top priorities for the corridor is a comprehensive streetscape design and rehabilitation program for Auburn and Edgewood.

Streetscapes are also important in the National Park Service precinct, where Jackson and Boulevard are important projects connecting the King District to the Freedom Parkway Trail. Hilliard Street is another major street identified for pedestrian improvements as it links three major locations - King Memorial MARTA Station, Grady Holmes and Walden Middle School and carries large volumes of pedestrian traffic.